

Chapter 6

Diverse Minds, Infinite Potential: Navigating Neurodiversity in Today's Workplace

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ABSTRACT

Emergence of the concept of neurodiversity has challenged the conventional perceptions of neurological differences by encapsulating the diversity of neurological variations such as autism spectrum disorders (ASD), attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), sensory stimuli disorders, etc. The neurodiversity concept asserts that these are natural variations in the human brain, each with its own set of strengths and perspectives. This concept advocates for a shift in societal attitudes, to accept and accommodate neurodivergent individuals, transcending a mere acknowledgment of differences. Perception revolving around and support to individuals with neurological differences, striving for a world that appreciates the richness of cognitive diversity is necessary. Embracing inclusivity is not just a moral imperative; it is a strategic business decision that positively impacts employee satisfaction, innovation, talent acquisition and customer relations, ultimately contributing to the overall success and sustainability of a business.

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1. INTRODUCTION

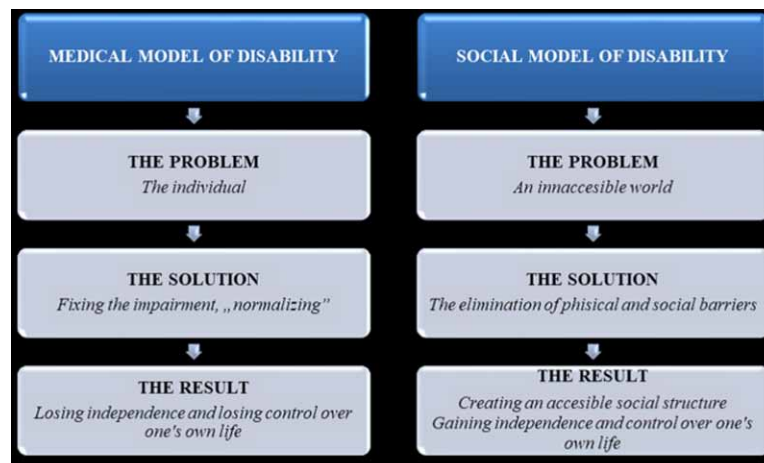
Over the past few decades, the number of psychiatric disorders has shown an increase. In the first edition of The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, published by The American Psychiatric Association in 1952, listed a number of 128 disease categories, their number had already reached 541 in 2013 (Blashfield et al., 2014).

Neurodiversity as a concept was first introduced by the Australian Sociologist Judy Singer, who laid attention on the diverse personalities of people who were either introverted or extroverted, dyslexic or even autistic, however, they form an integral part of the human race. Taking this aspect into account and considering the fact that approximately 10% of the population is neurodivergent in a way, employers cannot disregard this category of persons, as neurodiversity is beginning to gradually be part of the vocabulary used by the Human Resources department (Faragher, 2018).

Neurodiversity encompasses a range of key definitions that collectively contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the concept. One key definition emphasizes neurodivergence, a term used to describe individuals whose neurological development and functioning differ from what is considered typical (Milton, 2014). This includes conditions such as autism, ADHD, dyslexia and more. Neurodiversity also underscores the notion of neurotypicality, representing individuals whose neurological development aligns with societal expectations.

Disability of any kind related to either mental or learning, can be considered as a lack of ability to function according to the norms. As per the ‘medical model of disability’, this kind of lacking is caused by health challenges in people; these challenges can be overcome by applying medical treatments. Whereas, the social model of disability focuses on people with disabilities when they view the world. Here the disability is actually because of the way the society is organized, rather than actual challenges of an individual. Barriers can be physical or they can be caused by people’s attitudes towards these challenges. Social model, therefore, helps in identifying these barriers effecting the life of people with disabilities and focuses on the ways in which these can be avoided. At the other end, the medical model identifies what is “wrong” with the respective person and not what they need, leading to loss of independence and reduction of control over their own lives (Haegele and Hodge, 2016) (Figure 1).

Figure 1. The medical social model of disability vs. the social model of disability (Haegele & Hodge, 2016)



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